

Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders

(a Company Limited by Guarantee)

Charity Number 1106766

Company Number 04197666

Unaudited Financial Statements
and Annual Report

For the Year Ended
31 August 2024

Ascension Eagles Cherleaders

Legal and Administrative Information

Trustees	Sue Winston (Chair) Erica De Rosa Lewis Ridett Peter Sharp Farrah Mughal Tara Stimpson Susan Spiller Hayley Budd (resigned 14 June 2024) Larsen Mabika (resigned 14 June 2024)
Company Secretary	Tara Stimpson
Chief Executive Officer	Angela Green
Registered Office	Unit 2J St. Marks Industrial Estate 439 North Woolwich Road London E16 2BS
Independent examiners	Moore Kingston Smith LLP 6th Floor 9 Appold street London EC2A 2AP
Bankers	National Westminster Bank plc Frobisher Road Beckton London E6 5LX
Company Number	04197666
Charity Number	1106766

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TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity known as Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders for the year 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024.

The Trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements of the company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Since the charity qualifies as small under section 383, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under The Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 is not required.

Note:

*In 2022, the Board of trustees and the Management Team agreed that it would adopt the term “**The Group**” (or “We” or “Us”) to describe the combined activities of Ascension Eagles Cheerleading and Talent Central, to recognise and to emphasise that our mission is delivered through a range of competition, recreational and schools’ programmes.*

People working on behalf of The Group include senior managers (known as “the senior team” or “the Management Team”), the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Our objectives and activities

Our purpose, as stated in our Memorandum and Articles of Association, is to provide facilities for the recreation and leisure time occupation of young people under the age of 25 in the interest of social welfare.

We provide training in cheerleading activities and performance opportunities, to develop young peoples’ fundamental capacities, so that:

They may grow to full maturity as individuals, so that they become effective and considerate members of their communities, and their conditions of life may be improved.



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Our mission, vision and values

Our Mission	Our Vision	Our Values
We strive to develop Britain's best cheerleaders while transforming and inspiring children and young people to reach their full potential.	Cheerleading is an effective way of helping children and young people to be healthy and gain confidence, while helping them to make a positive difference – both in their community and in the world.	Consistency Integrity Perseverance Persistence

Background and history

Our charity began in 1996, as a grassroots outreach programme and part of the Ascension Church Centre, with the aim of keeping young people off the streets and out of trouble.

When AEC ranked bottom at their first National Championship in 1997, they were fed-up with negative stereotypes. They decided that coming bottom at Nationals was something they would not accept; instead, they combined efforts with the aspiration of achieving a different result in future competitions.

The following year, in 1998, they won their first National trophy, and, in doing so, proved to themselves that hard work can bring success.

With sheer determination and teamwork, this group of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds committed themselves to being the best that they could be.

Over a quarter of a century later, our programme is firmly established as the best of British Cheerleading, consistently coming top in competitions but also making a vital contribution to young peoples' social and physical development through our recreational classes and school programmes.



Structure, governance and management

The company was incorporated on 10 April 2001 and became a registered charity on 15 November 2004. It took over the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated association of the same name on 1 September 2004. The company is limited by guarantee and its management is the responsibility of the Trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association at each Annual General Meeting, with the day-to-day responsibility delegated to the Management Team.

The Group's Board has elected to follow the principles and practices set out in the [Charity Governance Code](https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en) (link: <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en>) as published by the Charity Commission.

Safeguarding

The Group recognises the importance of its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care ("the beneficiaries").

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We are committed to regular child protection training for all staff, coaches, volunteers and Trustees, to develop their understanding of the signs of abuse and how to respond to disclosures of abuse. Anyone in leadership who has contact with children/young people must complete an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and trustee appointments are subject to a DBS check; we believe this approach is sensible to mitigate risks to our beneficiaries and to the charity's reputation.

Our safeguarding policy, referred to as the Child And Adults At Risk Protection Policy ("CAARP Policy"), was reviewed and updated in May 2024 in line with changes recommended by the NSPCC. The latest version of our CAARP Policy is available for public view via [a link on the Ascension Eagles website.](https://www.ascensioneagles.com/_files/ugd/bf1a1d_b11abc239f4d475996f2703dbed04222.pdf) (link: https://www.ascensioneagles.com/_files/ugd/bf1a1d_b11abc239f4d475996f2703dbed04222.pdf)

In keeping with the requirement that all organisations working with children must have a designated individual who takes the lead on safeguarding, The Group's Board of Trustees annually appoint a Nominated Safeguarding Lead and a Deputy Safeguarding Lead to ensure the implementation of The Group's CAARP Policy.

In addition, the Board also appoints a Trustee Safeguarding Lead who reports to the Board at each Board meeting on The Group's safeguarding practice, including raising any concerns of which the Board needs to be aware and any incidents which have taken place (in accordance with any confidentiality/ reporting restrictions which may apply).

Trustee matters

Board changes in 2023-24

During the year, two members of the AEC Board stepped down. Both trustees faced a significant increase in their commitments at work, which meant they felt they were no longer able to give AEC the time they had intended to give when they joined the Board.

Hayley Budd resigned as a trustee on 14 June 2024. During her four years as an AEC trustee, Hayley made a significant contribution to the development of our approach to impact measurement, taking a leading role in designing our athlete surveys, and the analysis and presentation of the survey data.

Larsen Mabika resigned as a trustee on 14 June 2024. As a passionate supporter of our mission, Larsen led on the development of AEC's diversity and inclusion policy, and worked directly with AEC athletes on goal-setting.

We are grateful for the time, expertise and support Hayley and Larsen gave to AEC during their tenure. At the time of writing we are in the process of identifying potential new trustees to the Board and expect to finalise the appointments in Spring 2025.

Our approach to trustee appointments

We have a thorough and thoughtful approach to the selection and appointment of Trustees. We advertise trustee vacancies on sites such as Reach Volunteering and Getting OnBoard; we participate in the BoardMatch events run by the East London Business Alliance (ELBA), and we share vacancies on social media, such as LinkedIn. For roles requiring technical skills we also approach membership organisations for specialist roles (e.g. ICAEW for financial skills and IPD for people skills).

Mindful of the benefits of increased Board diversity, the Board aims to place value on candidates' passion for our mission - not simply on their skills or the extent of their professional experience. The Board also conducts a Trustee skills review every couple of years and seeks to address any skills gaps during Trustee recruitment programmes. A Board skills review was conducted in August 2024, in preparation for the recruitment of new trustees (appointments to be finalised in Spring 2025).

Our recruitment process

All Trustee applicants are invited to complete an Expression of Interest form and submissions are shared with the Board. Suitable candidates are informally interviewed by the Chair and, if possible, at least one other

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existing Trustee, then invited to attend one of The Group's events or to visit our gym to see what we do 'at first hand'.

Where possible, we aim for a candidate to have met at least 75% of the Trustees by this stage of the process. If the candidate is considered a potential appointee, they are invited to attend a Board meeting as an observer. If the candidate subsequently confirms that they still wish to proceed, the Board agrees in principle whether they wish to appoint the candidate. If they do, the potential new Trustee receives an induction pack (in line with the Charity Commission's recommendations), is subject to an enhanced DBS check and is asked to sign a declaration to confirm that they have not been disqualified from acting as a trustee and to declare any conflicts of interest.

All Trustee appointments are formally voted on by the Board. Any issues arising from the DBS checks or the declaration of eligibility may result in any offer of an appointment being withdrawn.

Review of The Group's policies and practices

All of the Group's policies were reviewed in May 2024 and the policies were approved by the Board. Each policy has a nominated Trustee who is responsible for ensuring each of their policies is up to date and reflects current regulatory requirements and best practice.

The Director's Report



Angela Green, Programme Director – Ascension Eagles, writes:

This past year represents one of the most challenging chapters in our organisation's history to date.

In September 2023 we officially received our three-months' notice on our existing premises at Gallions Reach, the place we had called home for the previous 13 years. Even though we had always wanted a more permanent home of our own, the reality of moving all of our operations from Gallions Reach by December was overwhelmingly daunting. However, we were committed to ensuring that all who benefit from the services we provide would not be negatively impacted by the move and - where possible- that they would have no interruption to their regular schedule.

It was with immense pride that we reopened our doors in our new facility in St Mark's industrial Estate to our families, just three weeks after we closed for our Christmas break in December 2023. This was made possible by the sheer hard work and dedication of our staff, trustees and building team, to whom I am incredibly grateful.

The season following our move was a huge success. Now, as we look forward to completing our first full year in the new space and all that we will achieve in our new home, we know the best is yet to come!

Highlights for the year include:

- Retaining our members during our relocation to St Marks; we only lost three members as a result of our move.
- We were successful in securing two years of funding from Go! London to ease our transition to a rented property.
- We completely redesigned our website and launched our new site in April 2024.

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- Two of our competition teams won an invitation to compete in the US Nfinity Finals to be held in Orlando in the United States of America. We have since created a travel team that will see 17 AEC athletes compete in this event in May 2025.

Junior Leadership Team (JLT)

Our Junior Leadership Team (JLT) programme continues to be a source of great pride for The Group. This programme offers an opportunity for AEC athletes to fulfil their ambition of becoming future leaders, both within the AEC programme and in their personal lives.

Participation in the JLT programme gives athletes a pathway to study for coaching qualifications, enhance their leadership skills and build their confidence – all of which enhance their employability.

These motivated young people take on additional responsibility for supporting other athletes and leading sessions. They receive guidance and mentorship from existing AEC leaders to help them develop their personal leadership style.

During the 2023-24 season each of our JLT members volunteered for over 125 hours and took part in a number of workshops. Nine of our members achieved their cheer coaching qualifications.

All of our JLT members attended first aid and safeguarding training during the season, and some all took part in additional activities, such as setting 'SMART' goals and cheer choreography skills.



“I love being a junior coach. It allows me to inspire and guide younger athletes while also developing my own leadership skills.”

Mara, junior coach, who supports Symphony our Youth 1 Team

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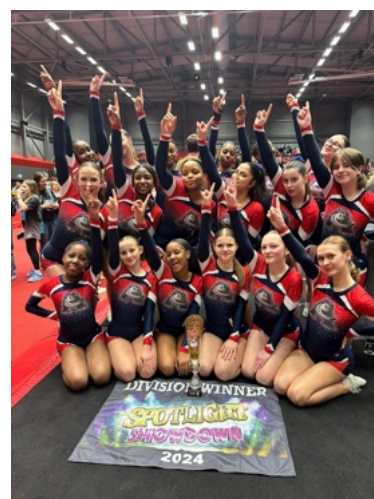
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Ascension Eagles in 2023-24

Competition results

Our squads train year-round and compete against regional and national teams in their respective age groups.

Prodigy Mini Level 1 Prep (aged 5-8)	Royalty Senior Level 1 (aged 10+)	Majesty Senior Level 2 (aged 11+)	Gravity Youth Novice (aged 6-11)
Legacy Regionals - 3 rd Future Cheer Regionals – 1 st Legacy Nationals - 3 rd ICC Nationals - 1 st & Grand Champions, USA Nfinity Finals Bid Winners	Legacy Regionals – 2 nd Future Cheer Regionals – 1 st Legacy Nationals – 3 rd ICE Nationals – 2 nd	Legacy Regionals – 2 nd Future Cheer Regionals - 2 nd Legacy Nationals – 4 th Future Cheer Nationals – 7 th	ICE Regionals Superior Rating ICC Nationals Excellent Rating



Symphony Youth Level 1 (aged 9-11)	Trinity Senior Level 3 (aged 11+)	Prophecy Junior Level 1 (aged 10-14)	Serenity (Special Educational Needs Team)
Legacy Regionals – 3 rd Future Cheer Regionals – 3 rd Legacy Nationals – Exhibition ICC Nationals - 1 st & USA Nfinity Finals Bid Winners	Legacy Regionals – 4 th Future Cheer Regionals – 3 rd Legacy Nationals – 3 rd Future Cheer Nationals – 8 th	Legacy Regionals – 4 th Future Cheer Regionals - 2 nd Legacy Nationals – 6 th Future Cheer Nationals - 7 th	<i>Performances at:</i> Legacy Regionals

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Talent Central in 2023-24

Talent Central is London's first "cheer gym", based on the well-respected principles, values and training ethos of Ascension Eagles. The centre continues to be used by many athletes, from beginners all the way through to other competitive cheer programmes. We deliver our community outreach work through the Talent Central brand.

Cheerleading as a sport, allows athletes to develop physical skills but also provides a team dynamic; enabling athletes to make friends and build relationships, giving them an additional support network in their fellow athletes and coaches

As we focus on building athlete development, it is important to us to have an offer for athletes at all levels of our sport, from the grassroots all the way to elite competitive pathways. In order to do this we offer a number of initiatives to maximise our impact and extend our reach.

Our recreational classes

Our recreational classes give young people aged five and upwards a pathway to joining us in the gym, regardless of their ability. We offer tumble-only sessions 3 times a week for young people, designed for them to simply have fun, make friends and build their basic skills. Alongside these sessions, we also delivered holiday camps across the school holidays for participants in our schools' programme and to children from the local community.

In these ways, we offer a key opportunity for young people to try our sport, without them having to commit fully to the costs and time-commitment that is required to take part in competitive cheerleading.

"My daughter recently started gymnastics class at TC and we were worried that she wouldn't be able to make friends as she's really shy. She was welcomed instantly and has lots of new friends in the class and has found a new level of confidence."

Parent feedback

"TC is an expert group of professionals that meet not just the technical needs of the girls, but their emotional needs as well. Incredibly happy to be part of this community and I have seen my daughter develop in confidence and skill since joining. I couldn't recommend TC enough."

Parent feedback

"I come here to learn new skills and make new friends. TC is the best."

Athlete feedback

"I like to do handstands and back walkovers. I like TC because it's fun. I feel really happy here."

Athlete feedback

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Our schools' outreach programme

Our school-based sessions are important as they allow us to extend the positive benefits of cheerleading beyond our gym facility. They enable us to take the experience of cheerleading into the wider community.

We began the 2023-24 season with 13 schools' classes a week, and finished the final school term with 14 schools participating in our schools' programme.

Each of the three school terms culminated in our showcase events, held at the former Olympic venue, ExCeL London. Every young person taking part received an individual medal and certificate; each school received a trophy and either a bronze, silver or gold award level certificate. In total, 906 children attended our three showcase events, making this our most successful season to date.

These showcase events have always created an important opportunity for young people from across our local communities to come together; crucially, these events allow them to expand their social networks by meeting other young people from different schools, cultures and backgrounds, with cheerleading giving them all a shared interest and goal.

We delivered cheerleading sessions for the following schools during the 2023-24 season: Britannia Village (two clubs), Calverton, Gallions Reach, Hallsville, Keir Hardie, Lathom Road (two clubs), Stratford Manor, New City, Rosetta (two clubs), Royal Wharf and St Angela's. We also welcomed young people from St Anthony's to our showcase events.

We are grateful to all of our school partners for the opportunity to bring the benefits and fun of cheerleading to so many young people, and we look forward to further building on our outreach programme over the coming seasons.



***"I am a very bubbly person
but struggle to make friends.
Cheer has helped me to be
more confident."***

***"I have met different people
than are in my usual
friendship group."***

Feedback from school programme participants

Chair's review

Looking back at 2023-24

Our top priority for the 2023-24 season was to establish The Group in its new 'home' at St Marks Industrial Estate in North Woolwich. The termination of our lease at Gallions Reach in December 2023 created an opportunity for The Group to realise a long-held ambition to have a space which offers even better cheerleading facilities, and in the longer-term to provide additional 'wrap-around' services for our members, as well as making the space available to other groups in the local community to optimise use of the space during the daytime.

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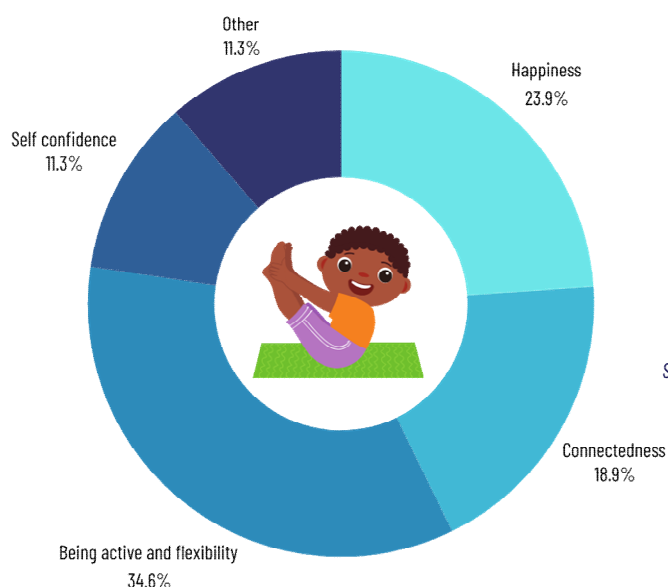
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As part of our informal feedback gathering during the 2023-24 season, we asked our athletes “*How does being part of AEC make you feel?*” Here are some of the responses we received across our different age groups, reproduced here exactly as they were written by the young people.



Our impact in 2023-2024

How we make a difference in young people's lives

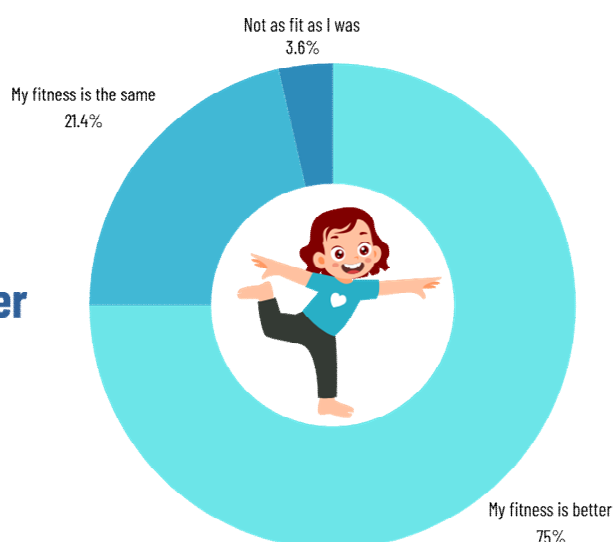


What difference does doing cheerleading make for you?

Source: AEC athletes and schools' participants
158 respondents, July 2024

How has your fitness level has changed over the past six months?

Source: AEC athletes and schools' participants
158 respondents, July 2024



Find it easy to make friends

78%

July 2023: 70%

Source: AEC athletes - 69 respondents, July 2024



Participate in other sports

66%

July 2023: 37%

Source: AEC athletes - 69 respondents, July 2024

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Strategic priorities for 2024-25

In summary, the strategic priorities agreed by the Board and management team as set out in our 2023-28 business plan are as follow:

1. **Growth:** Our ambition is to increase the total number of members in our competition and recreational programmes to 200 by the end of the 2027/28 season.
2. **Grant income and funding:** secure additional grant funding to help us cover the increased costs of operating from our new location and to diversify our non-operational income streams.
3. **Sponsorship:** secure corporate sponsorships to help us maintain our fees at an affordable level and to reduce the cost of competitions/events for members.

We will continue to look at ways in which we can diversify our income streams, such as establishing a regular giving programme for our alumni and renting out our gym space to local community groups when it's not being used by our athletes (e.g. daytime groups for local families or activity groups for older people).

In the same way that we experimented with offering classes for home-educated children in 2024, we are always looking for potential new ways to support our young people – for example, mentoring, arranging external speakers on relevant topics or setting up visits to local organisations to help give our young people a broader perspective.

In the near-term, our major challenge will be to identify, recruit and train suitable coaches to support our growth plans. The development and growth of our Junior Leadership Team programme will be crucial in this regard.

We are highly aware that The Group faces a financial challenge in the next three to five years, as we draw on the investment assets which we have been holding in reserve for several years, to cover the increased operational costs resulting from our relocation. It is imperative that we identify and secure new sources of income and grant funding to make the space sustainable for us for the next ten years and beyond.

Many of our families are likely to continue to face financial challenges in the coming year and as a charity we are also far from immune from the impacts of the wider UK economic situation. Inflation and increased tax rates provide additional pressure.

But there are opportunities ahead too; the need for our services is as great as ever. For example, East London has some of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the UK, with almost 30 percent of year-six children in Newham being identified as obese (*Source: the Government's National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) for England, 2022/23 school year*). We will continue to draw on our passion, experience and technical expertise to play our part in making a difference in the lives of young people in Newham and East London.

Funding and support

Without the continued support of all of our funders and donors we would not be able to make such a difference to so many young lives. In 2023-24 we were fortunate and thankful to receive support from:

Go!London; The Tuixen Foundation; The Royal Docks Trust (London); The Jack Petchey Foundation; abrdn; and ExCeL.

This financial support enables us to subsidise our fees significantly, allowing us to charge our athletes and participants approximately 40% less than the full cost of our services. Our donors' support therefore helps us to continue to make a healthy and fun activity affordable to the young people of Newham, giving them more choice and making sport more accessible for all. In addition to funding and gift-in-kind support we receive from the above organisations, we are also grateful for the support and commitment of our trustees, our members and their families, who volunteer so many hours annually to help ensure that The Group delivers its mission so effectively.

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Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Key Management Personnel comprise the Trustees and the management team. Trustees are not remunerated in their capacity as a Trustee. The remuneration of the management team is determined by the Trustees' annually in a Performance Management discussion.

Public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 and have paid due regard to public benefit when preparing this report. There are no unreasonable restrictions, which would prevent young people in London benefiting from The Group's services and support offered. The benefit provided to the public is consistent with the aims of the charity. All activities have been undertaken for the furtherance of public benefit and for the furtherance of The Group's aims and objectives as per our Memorandum and Articles of Association. Further detail and public impact of our actions in 2023-24 are included elsewhere in this report.

Financial review

The reserves as at the beginning of the year were £550,988. We recorded a decrease in the year in unrestricted funds from £494,769 to £459,612 as we began to utilise the reserves set aside to support The Group in our move to new premises.

We recorded a decrease in Restricted Funds from £56,219 to £25,418 also in relation to the move to our new premises and refurbishment of the new space.

Reserves policy

The Board believes that the minimum level of the unrestricted general fund should be the equivalent of six months' usual salaries and other operating costs. This currently equates to approximately £175,000 based on current levels of expenditure.

Unrestricted general funds at year end were £283,410.

Total unrestricted reserves including designated funds and investment revaluation reserve at year end was £459,612.

Preparation of this report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 13 January 2025.



Sue Winston
Chair of Board of Trustees, Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders

Date: 12 March 2025